

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Micah Swafford
202-225-2132

Istook Secures Help for Local Colleges

Washington, DC – Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) has included help for Seminole State College and St. Gregory's University in a major bill that should be signed into law next week. It includes federal funds for Seminole State and makes St. Gregory's eligible for a campus-improvement loan program.

"I am happy to help education in Shawnee and Seminole," said Istook.

Istook secured funds in the spending bill for Seminole State College-- \$200,000 for the SSC technology center and \$50,000 for their fast-track nursing program. That program enables licensed practical nurses (LPNs) to become registered nurses (RNs) in one year and helps ease Oklahoma's current nursing shortage.

"I am so excited about this award," said SSC President, Dr. James Utterback. **"This special federal appropriation will enable Seminole State College to continue to expand vital services. The leadership of Congressman Istook in this process is greatly appreciated by all of us associated with Seminole State College."**

Seminole State plans to use its funds to purchase computer equipment and educational software for the technology center and for student support and scholarships for the School of Nursing.

Istook also included language to help St. Gregory's. With the language, St. Gregory's would be prevented from applying for a USDA Community Facilities Loan. The program was recently limited to communities of less than 20,000, replacing the previous population cap of 50,000. Because St. Gregory's is located within the Shawnee city limits, with a population of 28,000, they were ineligible for the loan. Istook inserted a special exemption for St. Gregory's into the FY 2003 Omnibus Appropriations bill that the House should vote on this week.

"We at St. Gregory's are certainly grateful for Cong. Istook's hard work and assistance," said Father Lawrence Stasyszen, President of St. Gregory's University. **"This represents an investment not only in St. Gregory's but in this area. This gives us an opportunity to take advantage of the current low interest rates and helps us guarantee the welfare of our students and the future development of this important institution."**

In a letter to Istook requesting assistance, St. Gregory's indicated that, if eligible, they plan to apply for approximately \$1-million in loans to make necessary campus improvements. Among critical needs are mandated fire-safety systems in residence halls, updated elevators in classroom buildings and replacing dilapidated air conditioning and heating systems.

The FY 2003 Omnibus Appropriations bill is a combination of 11 separate appropriations bill, which is expected to pass the U.S. House this week. Senate passage is expected with Presidential approval next week.